

Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 SS-20 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 CU-04

PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 RSC-01 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00

EB-11 AID-20 PRS-01 INRE-00 /099 R

DRAFTED BY INR/REA:DTJONES/EB

APPROVED BY INR/REA WCHAMILTON

EA/K:DLRANARD (IN DRAFT)

S/S- MR. GAMMON

INR/OD:MPACKMAN

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O 150511Z NOV 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 225539

NOFORN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM, TOSEC 542, ZFF TOKYO ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: KS, PINT

SUBJECT: ROK: STUDENT DISORDERS AND DOMESTIC TENSIONS

PLEASE PASS S/S PARTY FOR THE SECRETARY

FOLLOWING REPRESENTS GIST OF FORTHCOMING INR INTELLIGENCE

NOTE:

1. THE LONGSTANDING OPPOSITION TO THE PARK REGIME OF MUCH OF THE SOUTH KOREAN PRESS, UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY, AND OTHER LIBERAL URBAN GROUPS HAS BEEN INTENSIFIED BY THE ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT SINCE LATE LAST YEAR. THE ROK CIA'S AUGUST ABDUCTION OF OPPOSITION LEADER KIM TAE CHUNG FROM A TOKYO HOTEL STIMULATED ADDITIONAL CRITICISM FROM VIRTUALLY ALL ELEMENTS OF KOREAN SOCIETY. BY AGREEING WITH TOKYO EARLY THIS MONTH ON A RESOLUTION

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OF THE KIM CASE, THE PARK GOVERNMENT MOVED TO DEFUSE

THE CASE AS AN ACTIVE ISSUE IN KOREAN POLITICS. NEVERTHE-
LESS, THE POSITION OF THE ROK CIA, A PRINCIPAL PILLAR OF
THE PARK REGIME, HAS BEEN WEAKENED AND A SEOUL CONSCIOUS
OF ITS TARNISHED INTERNATIONAL IMAGE MAY BE LESS READY TO
UTILIZE OVERTLY REPRESSIVE MEASURES TO COUNTER OPPOSITION
OVER COMING MONTHS.

2. STUDENTS REACT. PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT REACTION
TO THE KIM AFFAIR WAS THAT OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.
KOREAN STUDENTS HAVE SOME REPUTATION FOR POLITICAL
ACTIVISM; THEY PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE OVERTHROW OF
SYNGMAN RHEE IN 1960. ON OCTOBER 2, SEVERAL HUNDRED
STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED AT SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (SNU),
DEMANDING THE "TRUTH" ABOUT THE KIM TAE CHUNG KIDNAPPING
AND AN END TO "FASCIST CIA RULE" AND ALLEGED JAPANESE
ECONOMIC DOMINATION. RIOT POLICE SWEEPED UP MORE THAN 200
STUDENTS AND ENDED THE DEMONSTRATION WITH DISPATCH AND
WITHOUT BLOODSHED. PRESIDENT PARK, REPORTEDLY FURIOUS,
ORDERED STERN MEASURES TO PREVENT ANY REPETITION.

3. THE ROK CIA WAS CAUGHT OFFGUARD BY THE FIRST SIGNIF-
ICANT ANTI-REGIME STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN TWO YEARS.
ITS CONTROL OF THE CAMPUSES WAS IN EFFECT CALLED INTO
QUESTION BY STUDENTS WHO SHOWED GREAT SOPHISTICATION IN
SEMICLANDESTINE ACTIVITY. CAMPUS UNREST, PARTICULARLY AT
SNU, SIMMERED THROUGHOUT OCTOBER, WITH SPORADIC CLASS
BOYCOTTS, CLANDESTINE ANTI-GOVERNMENT LEAFLETS, AND LOW-
LEVEL POLITICAL MEETINGS.

4. THE OCTOBER 25 DEATH OF AN SNU LAW PROFESSOR DURING
ROK CIA INTERROGATION FURTHER HEIGHTENED TENSIONS. SINCE
THE STUDENTS GENERALLY BELIEVED THE ALLEGED 'SUICIDE'
HAD OCCURRED IN CONSEQUENCE OF CIA TORTURE, ROKG OFFICIALS
EXPECTED A STRONG CAMPUS REACTION. THEY MOVED QUICKLY TO
FORESTALL IT. ON OCTOBER 26, THEY RELEASED KIM TAE CHUNG
FROM HOUSE ARREST. ON OCTOBER 28 THEY RELEASED ALL BUT
A HANDFUL OF THE ARRESTED STUDENTS.

5. BUT THESE CONCESSIONS ONLY WHETTED STUDENT DEMANDS.
SNU BOYCOTTS CONTINUED AND 2,000 STUDENTS REPORTEDLY
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SIGNED A STATEMENT PLEDGING TO WITHDRAW FROM THE UNIVER-
SITY IF ALL DEMONSTRATORS WERE NOT RELEASED AND "DEMOCRACY
RESTORED." ON NOVEMBER 5 SEVERAL HUNDRED TAEGU UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS MARCHED OFF CAMPUS IN THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT
DEMONSTRATION OUTSIDE SEOUL. ON NOVEMBER 6 40 STAFF
MEMBERS OF THE INFLUENTIAL NEWSPAPER TONGA ILBO STAGED A
SITDOWN STRIKE IN THEIR EDITORIAL OFFICES DEMANDING CIA
PERMISSION TO COVER THE TAEGU ACTIVITIES. ACCEDING TO

THE DEMAND, THE CIA HAS PERMITTED MEDIA COVERAGE OF SUBSEQUENT STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS. MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, THE 5TH INFANTRY DIVISION, RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING ORDER IN THE CAPITAL, HAS BEEN PLACED ON STANDBY ALERT. NEVERTHELESS, STUDENT DISSENT, THOUGH STILL RELATIVELY LOW KEY, HAS CONTINUED TO MOUNT. SCATTERED CLASS BOYCOTTS ARE TAKING PLACE AND SOME STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN TO WEARING BLACK MOURNING BANDS ON SEOUL CAMPUSES.

6. THE OUTLOOK. OUTWARD INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE PARK REGIME HAS THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SOME HEFTY INSTRUMENTS OF CONTROL AT ITS DISPOSAL -- CIA AGENTS, ORDINARY POLICE, A RECENTLY EXPANDED RIOT POLICE, REGULAR ARMY UNITS. IN ADDITION, THE REGIME COUNTS ON THE EXCELLENT RICE CROP AND DECLINING UNEMPLOYMENT TO BOLSTER IT AGAINST POLITICAL DISTURBANCE. MOREOVER, FEW OF THE 60,000 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SEOUL ARE POLITICALLY ACTIVE, THE DECEMBER-THROUGH-FEBRUARY MID-WINTER UNIVERSITY BREAK IS FAST APPROACHING, FACULTIES ARE URGING CALM AND THE OPPOSITION NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS AVOIDED INVOLVEMENT.

7. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE DISTURBING ELEMENTS IN THE OVERALL SITUATION -- THE APPARENTLY INCREASING ISOLATION AND INFLEXIBILITY OF PRESIDENT PARK, SIGNS OF DISCONTENT AMONG THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND OTHER GROUPS OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITIES, AND CONTINUING INFLATION. PERHAPS MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, THE EXCESSIVE CAUTION OF THE REGIME'S OWN BEHAVIOR BETRAYS A NERVOUS UNEASINESS WHICH BEARS CONTINUED WATCHING. RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, KIDNAPPING, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, OPPOSITION PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE225539
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DTJONES/EB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731131/aaaaawsr.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Nov-2001 by willialc>; APPROVED <06 MAR 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROK: STUDENT DISORDERS AND DOMESTIC TENSIONS PLEASE PASS S/S PARTY FOR THE SECRETARY
TAGS: PINT, KS, (KIM TAE-CHUNG)
To: TOKYO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005